

in or are otherwise eligible for unemployment compensation and are unable to collect it.

Effectively, as shown, this is the inadequacy in terms of childcare. Only 14 percent of eligible children have access to Government-assisted childcare.

These charts give you some idea why the working families of America have such apprehension in terms of the future and in terms of their own lives. We need the programs to be able to deal with this situation. We have a number of recommendations, and I will mention them very quickly this afternoon and will put in additional kinds of information.

First, we need to safeguard working families from the turbulence of the modern economy by providing stronger and better support for families in crisis. Our country is going through profound economic shifts, and too many workers are losing their jobs in the wake of these changes.

I have introduced bipartisan legislation, the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act, to make sure those who have worked hard and paid into the system get the benefits they deserve. I hope we will see progress on the bill soon so that much more that needs to be done will be done to help Americans who are struggling to find a job.

We also need an aggressive agenda to help families facing a health care crisis. We must make more progress toward a universal, comprehensive program that is going to be there and be available and accessible to all Americans.

In the meantime, we can follow the examples of my own State, Massachusetts, which has taken the lead in providing our residents access to quality health care. It is absolutely essential, as these charts pointed out, that we address this problem.

Strengthening the safety net alone is not enough. We need to redouble our efforts to restore economic opportunity for families. Americans are working harder than ever, and they need the additional kinds of training. In my State now we have 145,000 unemployed. We have 75,000 job openings. They are good jobs. Yet, we have seen a continuing reduction in terms of training programs. Those people could get the jobs and be taxpayers and be committed and productive members of society. But we have seen over the period of the recent years, including with this last budget request, a continued reduction in terms of training programs by this administration.

We know workers have to have a continuing, ongoing upgrading of their skills in order to be able to deal with these jobs. I think we need labor law reforms, such as the Employee Free Choice Act, to protect the right to organize so employees can stand up and fight for what is fair.

I think we need to address again the earned income tax credit to help those at the bottom of the economic ladder

who have worked hard and played by the rules. We have to continue, I think, the progress we have made in the increase in the minimum wage so we do not fall back in terms of providing working families with a decent income.

The late Barbara Jordan once said:

What the [American] people want is very simple. They want an America as good as its promise.

The promise of America is that it is truly a land of opportunity, where every working family can share in the Nation's prosperity, where we all rise together, and we can be confident that our children have a bright future. For decades we enjoyed that vision of shared prosperity. I am confident we can make that promise a reality for American families again. We owe it to all the workers who have seen their bills go up, while their paychecks go down. We owe it to all the parents who cannot sleep at night because they are worried about their children's future. We owe it to all the families who are struggling and need a reason to celebrate this holiday season. We owe the American people our best efforts, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the weeks and months ahead to put working families back on track.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

UNANIMOUS-CONSENT AGREEMENT—H.R. 3688

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that following my remarks in morning business for about 15 minutes, the Senate proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 480, H.R. 3688, the United States-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement; that the statutory time be reduced to 10 hours, equally divided as provided for under the statute; that when the Senate resumes the measure on Tuesday, December 4, there be 90 minutes remaining for debate equally divided; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the measure be set aside until 2:15 p.m. and, without further intervening action or debate, the Senate proceed to vote on passage of H.R. 3688 at 2:15 p.m. on Tuesday.

This unanimous consent agreement has been cleared by both sides.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise this afternoon to speak in connection with the 2007 farm bill which was being debated on the floor of the Senate over the last several weeks prior to the time of Thanksgiving. As I rise to speak about the farm bill, I wish to say thank you to my colleague and good friend from Massachusetts, Senator KENNEDY, for again bringing to the attention of the American public the importance of what is happening economically across the spectrum of America today, which

is that there is a great sense of concern and instability and nervousness among the American public about what is happening in their own economic lives and whether their children will have access to higher education, whether they will be able to afford health care and health care insurance, whether gas prices are going to essentially force them to not be able to afford the essentials of life.

I think within all of that, one of the things Senator KENNEDY so eloquently speaks to is this covenant of America, that somehow we are all here as Americans in a common mission to try to create a better world for our children and for our grandchildren and for the rest of humanity. The one thing we cannot afford to do is to allow that covenant to be broken. We in this Chamber of the U.S. Senate, working in a bipartisan way, have an obligation to ensure that the covenant of America is something we honor, something we give dignity to in our efforts through our work.

As part of that work, one of the things I think is very critical is that we not forget those parts of America which, in many ways, have been the forgotten America, and those are the communities of rural America. Those are communities like the towns and the counties where I come from and the county of Conejos County, which is one of the poorest counties in the United States of America, which, no matter how well the rest of America is doing, seems to be struggling on the vine.

So it is important for us in the Senate, in the weeks and days ahead, to do everything we can to make sure we pass the farm bill because it is a farm bill that is good for America. It is a farm bill that is good for nutrition. As my good friend KENT CONRAD and my good friend Senator HARKIN have kept reminding the people of America, 67 percent of the bill we are working on is for nutrition. That aspect of our legislation is invented to provide assistance to those who are most in need. So I am hopeful that as we move forward this week and next week, we as the Senate will come together on a bipartisan basis to move forward with a farm bill that is so essential to the food security of the Nation.

I wish to thank Chairman HARKIN and Senator CHAMBLISS for their hard work on this farm bill we have put so much time on for the last 2½ years. I also thank Chairman BAUCUS and Ranking Member GRASSLEY for their work on the Finance Committee because their contribution to this farm bill has been so essential to get us to a point where we have a forward-thinking and balanced bill on the floor. I know that as I speak this afternoon, there are negotiations underway with respect to whether we can narrow the number of amendments to be considered on the floor so that we can move forward to consideration and hopefully final passage of this bill.

A lot of folks in this country are looking to us in the Senate this week